



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1321.0 - Small Business in Australia, 1999

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 23/05/2000

MEDIA RELEASE

May 23, 2000

Embargoed 11:30am (AEST)

60/2000

Growth in Small Business Sector Slows

The number of Australian small businesses increased by 2.0 per cent per annum over the three years 1995-6 to 1998-99 according to a report released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

This compares to an average growth rate of 3.7 per cent for the small business sector over the 15 years that data have been collected.

The slowing in the growth rate was due to a decline of 0.4 per cent per annum in the number of small businesses that do not have employees. Offsetting this, the number of small businesses with employees increased by 4.2 per cent per annum over the three years.

The report found there were more than 951,000 small non-agricultural businesses operating in Australia in 1998-99.

Between 1983-84 and 1998-99 the number of small businesses with employees increased by 88 per cent (or 4.3 per cent per annum) to 528,000 businesses and non-employing businesses increased by 55 per cent (or 3.0 per cent per annum) to 423,000 businesses.

Total small business employment increased by 59 per cent (3.1 per cent per annum) between 1983-84 and 1998-99 rising to 3.1 million people. This is 47% of the private sector workforce.

Growth in small business employment over the three years to 1998-99 was 1.6 per cent, well below the long term average. Over the three years, the number of employees in small businesses grew at 2.9 per cent per year, but the number of persons working in their own unincorporated businesses recorded a decline.

Across the States and Territories, the average annual growth rate in the number of small businesses over the 15 years to 1998-99 was highest in Western Australia (4.9 per cent) and Queensland (4.8 per cent), while Victoria (3.1 per cent) and Tasmania (2.5 per cent) recorded the lowest growth rate.

This publication provides a range of information about small business, reports on an ABS review of business size definition and a comparison between Australian Tax Office and ABS data for non employing businesses.

Full details, plus information on non-employing businesses, industry performance and profiles of selected industries are in **Small Business in Australia 1999** (cat. no. 1321.0) available in all ABS bookshops. If you wish to purchase a copy of this publication, contact the ABS Bookshop in your capital city.

This page last updated 8 December 2006

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